

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GISCARD INTERVIEW IN LE FIGARO MAY 21 --;
FOREIGN POLICY SECTIONS

SUMMARY. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH LE FIGARO PUBLISHER
JEAN D'ORMESSON, PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING TERMED
AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA AS "THE END AND
RECOGNITION OF AN ERROR." HE THOUGHT THAT AMERICAN
POLICY WOULD BE FREER NOW THAT VIETNAM IS OVER, CALLED
THE HYPOTHESIS OF AN AMERICAN MILITARY WITHDRAWAL FROM
EUROPE "TOTALLY ABSURD" AND TERMED FRANCO-GERMAN
ENTENTE A "FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTION" OF GOF FOREIGN POLICY.
ON EUROPE, GISCARD STATED THAT FOR THE PRESENT AND
NEAR FUTURE, EUROPEAN POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE COHES FIRST;
EUROPEAN DEFENSE "WIGL BE DEALT WITH LATER."

1. THE UNITED STATES, SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE W LD:
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GISCARD WAS ASKED TO ANALYZE "THE AMERICAN RETREAT FROM
SOUTHEAST ASIA." HIS RESPONSE: "IT'S THE END AND
THE RECOGNITION OF AN ERROR. NATURWLLY, IT'S EASY TO
SAY NOW, BUT IT APPEARS VERY CLEARLY THAT AMERICAN

POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA DID NOT MAKE SENSE. IT COULD NOT ATTAIN ITS OBJECTIVES; BESIDES, IN RETROSPECT, IS IT POSSIBLE TO STATE ITS OBJECTIVES WITH PRECISION? WAS IT THE MILITARY CONQUEST IN VIETNAM? I DON'T THINK SO. WAS IT THE SUPPORT OF A REGIME WHICH CLEARLY HAD NO POPULAR ROOTS, OR AT LEAST NONE WHICH HAD NOT BEEN CUT? YOU CAN'T SAY THAT EITHER. IT (AMERICAN RETREAT FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA) IS THUS THE END OF AN ERROR."

WWM CONSEQUENCES OF THE US WITHDRAWAL: "I THINK THERE ARE TWO CONSEQUENCES. FIRST, INCONTESTABLY, THE WEAKENING OF AMERICAN CREDIBILITY IN THAT PART OF THE WORLD -- THAT IS A CAUSE FOR WORRY SINCE THAT PART OF THE WORLD IS SENSITIVE AND HAS BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE. YOU CAN SEE THIS CONSEQUENCE QUITE WELL IN COUNTRIES LIKE LAOS, WHICH HAD REACHED AN EQUILIBRIUM AND WHICH COULD HAVE KEPT IT. YOU SEE CLEARLY THAT THIS EQUILIBRIUM IS THREATENED. WORLDWIDE, I THINK, YOU HAVE TO BE, CONTRARILY, MORE RESERVED IN THE DIAGNOSIS. VIETNAM WEIGHED HEAVILY IN AMERICAN POLICY BOTH EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL. THE FACT THAT THIS DRAMA HAS BEEN DEFINITELY ENDED CAN FREE THE US AND GIVE IT MORE LIBERTY OF ANALYSIS AND BEHAVIOR IN OTHER SECTORS OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY."

3. EUROPEAN DEFENSE: POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE IS A PREREQUISITE: AFTER TERMING AN AMERICAN MILITARY RETREAT FROM WESTERN EUROPE A "TOTALLY ABSURD HYPOTHESIS", GISCARD WAS ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A EUROPEAN COMMON DEFENSE INDEPENDENT OF THE US. HIS RESPONSE: "I THINK WE MUST ALWAYS HAVE THE IDEA THAT THERE WILL BE TWO SUCCESSIVE PERIODS HAVING TO DO WITH THIS VERY IMPORTANT SUBJECT. THERE WILL BE A FIRST PERIOD DEVOTED TO A SEARCH FOR THE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF EUROPE AND THERE LATER WILL BE A SECOND PERIOD WHICH WILL BE THE EXERCISE OF A CERTAIN DEFENSE FUNCTION. BUT FOR EVIDENT REASONS, TO IMAGINE THAT THESE TWO

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SUBJECTS CAN BE DEALT WITH AT THE SAME TIME -- AND STILL MORE TO TREAT THE SUBJECT OF DEFENSE BEFORE HAVING TREATED THE PROBLEM OF A POLICY OF INDEPENDENCE -- IS A FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF DIAGNOSIS WHICH WAS COMMITTED LAST YEAR. AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE ONLY OBJECTIVE WHICH I BELIEVE TO BE ATTAINABLE DURING THE YEARS TO COME IS THE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF EUROPE. THE SECOND WILL BE DEALT WITH LATER."

4. EUROPEAN DEFENSE -- THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: GISCARD WAS ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTION: "IF YOU EXCLUDE AN AMERICAN MILITARY RETREAT (FROM EUROPE), DO YOU BELIEVE THAT IN THE LONG RUN, AFTER POLITICAL

UNION, OUR EUROPEAN PARTNERS WILL MOVE TOWARDS THE CONCEPT OF A EUROPEAN DEFENSE?" HIS RESPONSE: "THERE ALREADY EXISTS A CERTAIN CONSCIOUSNESS. IN COUNTRIES AS TRADITIONALLY EUROPEAN AS BELGIUM, FOR EXAMPLE, YOU HAVE SEEN THAT A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN TAKEN. WE HAVE NOT YET ARRIVED AT THE IDEA OF A EUROPEAN DEFENSE BUT WE ARE ALREADY THINKING ABOUT THE FACT THAT WE MAY HAVE THE INDUSTRIAL MEANS TO ASSURE A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF OUR DEFENSE. YET, I DO NOT THINK THAT THIS IS A PROBLEM WHICH SHOULD PRESENTLY BE CONSIDERED SUSCEPTIBLE OF RAPID SOLUTION BECAUSE, I REPEAT, IT TRIGGERS A SERIES OF REACTIONS WHICH BLOCK DIPLOMATIC EVOLUTION; THIS SUFFICES, AND WE HAVE SEEN IT IN THE PAST, TO BLOCK OR IN ANY CASE TO COMPLICATE THE MECHANISM. THUS, AS OFTEN HAPPENS IN POLITICS, AND THIS IS SOMETHING THAT I SAW THIS YEAR, WE MUST BE CAPABLE OF TREATING ONLY THE SUBJECT YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT EVEN IF SOME SAY 'AND THIS OTHER POINT?' AT THE PRESENT TIME WE CAN MAKE PROGRESS ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE; WE SHOULD NOT SEEK TO BEGIN OUR DISCUSSIONS OF DEFENSE PROBLEMS."

5. EUROPEAN MONETARY POLICY: GISCARD SAID HE FELT THAT FRANCE'S RETURN TO THE EUROPEAN SNAKE IS A STEP TOWARDS LAUNCHING EUROPEAN MONETARY AND ECONOMIC UNION. BUT HE POINTED TO "THE GREAT DIFFICULTY ARISING FROM THE PARTICULAR SITUATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE SERIOUS DIVERGENCES, WHICH APPEAR DURABLE, EXISTING BETWEEN UNCLASSIFIED

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GREAT BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC AND MONETARY EVOLUTION AND THAT OF THE GROUP OF WESTERN COUNTRIES.

6. FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS: ASKED IF THERE WERE TRUTH TO THE CLAIMS OF HIS OPPONENTS THAT HE GIVES SPECIAL FAVOR TO A FRANCO-GERMAN AXIS IN THE CREATION OF EUROPE, GISCARD ANSWERED: "THERE IS SOME TRUTH IN IT. YOU HAVE NOTICED THAT WE TAKE GREAT CARE NEVER TO EXCLUDE ANYONE IN OUR RAPPROCHEMENT, BUT THE IDEA THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR EUROPE THAT THERE BE FRANCO-GERMAN UNDERSTANDING ON MAJOR SUBJECTS IS IN FACT A FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT OF OUR POLICY." RUSH

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